



Alberta
School Councils' Association

www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A highlight for the ASCA Board of Directors was Education Minister Thomas Lukaszuk's attendance at our recent board meeting. The Minister conversed with board members for more than two hours on a variety of education topics.



Bill 18, the Education Act legislation, was top of the list but we also heard Minister Lukaszuk's thoughts on a number of issues including standardized testing, parent engagement in the education system, high school transition to post-secondary or the workforce, wrap-around services for students and the labour stability agreement with the *Alberta Teachers' Association* and the *Alberta School Boards Association*.

The Minister stressed the important role parents play in education, by supporting their children as students in the system, and as active participants on school council advising the principal and the school board on education matters. We look forward to the Minister's "ten-point plan" he is unveiling in the new year, as well as the new Education Act shaping education for the future and thank the Minister for taking time out of his incredibly busy schedule to meet with us.

ASCA membership is now over 1250 school councils with the addition of both Edmonton Public and Calgary Public school boards having sponsored their school councils' membership in the Association.

Recent participation in provincial committees for ASCA included the *Curriculum Policy Advisory* and curriculum redesign, the *Teaching Quality Standard* review, the *School Leadership Framework*, a "partners" task force on *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Student Success and Wellbeing*, and the regional face-to-face Bill 18 input sessions.

ASCA attended and brought greetings to the *Public School Boards Association of Alberta*, the *Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association* and the *Alberta School Boards Association* conferences and fall general meetings.

Education is on the move, and ASCA is a big part of it! It's been a busy and exciting fall and we look forward to an equally busy and exciting



new year. On behalf of all of us on the Board of Directors, **Happy Holidays** and all the best in 2012 to you and your family.



DISCUSSION FORUM

The ASCA website provides opportunity to discuss issues in education with others. Current topics in the forum include *best practices for school councils*, the new *Education Act*, *student health and wellness* and *provincial achievement testing*. Join the conversation!



ACHIEVEMENT TESTING

The ASCA currently does not have an explicit policy or position on Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs). The Board of Directors considers the following about the value of PATs, and their usefulness in improving learning opportunities for students.

- PATs in Alberta have helped improve teaching, tweak curriculum, and identify improvements that ultimately benefit student learning.
- In terms of accountability to parents for their children's learning in a publicly funded education system, PATs have a proven (and positive) track record as a solid assessment strategy in the basket of assessment tools available to professional educators.
- In the 1970's, standardized tests were discontinued in Alberta and the result of this was a marked decline in student achievement, which caused the government to reintroduce them a few years later.
- The *Alberta Commission on Learning* undertook research as part of its examination of Alberta's education system in 2002. One of the recommendations in that report endorsed PATs and recommended their expansion to other grades.
- The most recent research is *The Alberta Student Assessment Study*, 2009, an independent study carried out by researchers headed up by Dr. Charles Webber, University of Calgary.
- A series of recommendations were included in the report, one of which was "Continue Provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Examinations." A copy of the Study can be accessed at <http://education.alberta.ca/department/ipr/archive.aspx>.

We hope that before any major policy shift is implemented or the discontinuation of grades three and six PATs, there would be an opportunity for public debate and consultation.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

It's been an exciting autumn for ASCA and for education!

Membership in the Association climbed to an all-time high with just over 1,250 school councils now in the ASCA family. Welcome to Edmonton Public and Calgary Public school councils - we look forward to serving and supporting you.

The new ASCA website opened doors to networking platforms for school councils and parents, connecting people with common interests in education and encouraging the sharing of good school council practices. An engaging and resourceful website, if you haven't already created a profile and joined your school council group, take a few moments to register, and explore all it has to offer.

In addition to five training webcasts available (*anytime*) on the website, ASCA presented its first instructional webinar on October 25th. Over 200 school council participants registered for either the afternoon or evening School Council Leaders session. Evaluations were very positive - "attending" the webinar from the comfort of home, a choice of time slots, content, delivery and the sharing of great ideas through the chat function. ASCA is planning the next webinar for February 2012 - watch the website for more details.

Progressing with a social media presence for digital connecting - ASCA is now on **Facebook**, and you can follow us on **Twitter** at **ABSchoolCouncil**.

Connecting with the new Minister of Education, the Honourable Thomas Lukaszuk was appreciated when he came to the ASCA Board of Directors meeting and engaged board members in a two hour conversation about education issues. The Minister's mandate includes working to establish minimum three-year funding cycles for education and a focus in the short term for the draft Education Act with a new round of consultations. Face-to-face meetings around the province and online opportunities are offered for you to share your thoughts and ideas on the new Education Act. Be sure to take this opportunity to have your say about Bill 18, Education legislation and the future of learning.

Looking ahead - connecting to share ideas, learn from each other and have some fun - is what the ASCA Conference and AGM is all about. It's a chance for school council members from across Alberta to learn, laugh and share good practices and strategies for school council success and better parental engagement in education. **Mark your calendars! April 20 - 22, 2012** at the Delta Edmonton South - watch the website in the new year for registration information.

From all of us at the ASCA office, the best of the holiday season and a very Happy New Year to you and your families.



Michele

ONLINE RESOURCES

In addition to the online community benefits of the new ASCA website, resources are readily available to assist with school council effectiveness.

Visit our website under the **Tools** tab to utilize the following resources:

Tutorials

- Introduction to ASCA
- Chair Basics
- Effective School Councils
- School Council Members
- School Councils and Fundraising Societies: Important Similarities and Differences

Templates

- School Council Three Year Plan
- Family Engagement Form
- Code of Ethics-School Council as a Whole
- Code of Conduct-School Council Members
- PIPA Sample Policy
- Recruitment Poster
- Meeting Tent Cards

Tip Sheets

- Effective School Council Checklist
- Parental Involvement Checklist
- School Council Bylaw Checklist
- School Council Chair Basics
- Running A Smooth Meeting
- Making Motions
- Increase Meeting Participation
- Changes to the School Council Regulation

Training

- Primary Sessions
- Intermediate Sessions
- Advanced Sessions
- Councils of School Councils (COSCs) Presentations
- School District Services



The ASCA office will be closed from the 23rd of December for the Christmas break, reopening on January 3rd, 2012.

Happy Holidays!

STUDENT WELLNESS

Research shows that healthy students are better learners, and better-educated individuals are healthier. The Comprehensive School Health (CSH) approach is an effective way to improve both student health and educational outcomes.

An increasing number of Alberta school jurisdictions are identifying Comprehensive School Health (CSH) and wellness-related programs and policies as priority issues for their school communities. CSH programs can be effective in improving healthy eating, active living, and positive well-being among children and youth.

Successful CSH programs involve strong partnerships between home, school, and community stakeholders. Parents and school councils play an important role in creating school communities that support the healthy development of children and youth.

How can parents and school councils contribute to healthy school communities?

- Build relationships with school administration and staff to gain their support for initiatives that improve school health.
- Learn more about how student health and wellness are supported within the school and school jurisdiction. Ask how the school council can partner to enhance health and wellness.
- Advocate for school jurisdiction policies that support student wellness. Many Alberta school jurisdictions have adopted policies related to student wellness, nutrition and active living. Parents can have a strong influence on policy development and implementation.
- Organize or participate on school wellness teams that include students, parents, teachers, and community members working together to create healthy school environments.
- Include health and wellness as a standing agenda item at school council meetings. You may also consider forming a health and wellness sub-committee.
- Engage key partners who can support health and wellness in your school, such as community organizations or health professionals.
- Act as role models to help reinforce the healthy behaviours that children and youth learn about in school.

The **Healthy Weights Initiative** is a Government of Alberta project that aims to support healthy weights among children and youth by promoting healthy eating, active living and positive well-being. As part of this initiative, **Health Promotion Coordinators** are available to support the development of healthy school communities.

To learn more about CSH and to find a **Health Promotion Coordinator** in your area, email: HealthyWeightsTeam@albertahealthservices.ca.

Excellence in Teaching Awards nominations accepted until February 3rd

Alberta Initiative for School Improvement AISI Conference February 13 - 14, 2012

EDUCATION ACT REVIEW

Education Minister Thomas Lukaszuk decided not to go forward with Bill 18, the Education Act, in the Fall Legislative Session. Further public and stakeholder engagement will take place to ensure the legislation benefits the children of Alberta and reflects the findings of *Inspiring Education*.

The Province launched *Our Children, Our Future: Getting it Right* for public consultation on the Education Act, holding forums in seven communities and opportunities to provide input through the website education.alberta.ca/engage, twitter, facebook, letters and emails to the Minister.

Students, parents, teachers and others interested in building education success are invited to participate in consultations on the Education Act.

The consultation is open until January 8, 2012. The new Education Act will be introduced in the Legislature in Spring 2012.

AGM RESOLUTIONS

The deadline for proposed Issue Resolutions for the ASCA 2012 AGM is December 14, 2011.

ASCA members can propose an *issue for change in education* by sponsoring an *Issue Resolution* to be considered by members at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on April 22, 2012.

Visit the website under **Advocacy** for more information on how to influence change at the provincial level and the *Issue for Change* submission form.



**Alberta School Councils' Association
Conference & Annual General Meeting**

ASCA MEMBERS

Ensure your annual school council membership is up to date to take advantage of ASCA services, reduced rates for the Annual Conference and voting rights at the AGM.

Submit a **Contact Us** message from our website if you are unsure as to your membership status or need to update your contact information.

WEBINAR SUCCESS

Some 200 *School Council Leaders* from across the province participated in the (first) ASCA instructional webinar held on October 25th.

Individuals and groups from school councils learned not only from the ASCA Instructor, but also from each other with the online chat feature.

ASCA is working to create additional webinars to address challenges facing school councils. Watch our website for webinar information.

Also posted on the website is a link to the October 25th presentation at www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/events/event_details.asp?id=181407.

PARENT OF DISTINCTION



Congratulations to Tanya Wurzer from Jennie Emery Elementary School in Coaldale, recipient of the ASCA 2011 **Parent of Distinction** Award.

The ASCA Parent of Distinction Award recognizes an individual who demonstrates ability to promote parental involvement in the public education system.

Visit our website for information on the ASCA 2012 Awards of Recognition.

DID YOU KNOW ...

A recent study noted, “on average, the score point difference in reading that is associated with parental involvement is largest when parents read a book with their child, when they talk about things they have done during the day, and when they tell stories to their children.”

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Published 5 times per year by Alberta School Councils' Association
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NEWS



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